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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls

Statement submitted by Women's Environment and Development Organization, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

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Position paper for the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women: More actions, enough words!!! Women's rights are not negotiable!!!

In 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 189 Governments adopted the Beijing Platform for Action, which identified goals for overcoming obstacles to the advancement of women in the world. In the Platform, Governments acknowledged that women's rights were central to development and peace, and that women's issues and global issues are one and the same. Women thus won a broad-based agenda for promoting and protecting their human rights worldwide, while establishing the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men in all arenas.

Yet, despite some policy gains, 10 years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, women – especially poor women-- the world over continue to face many of the same critical issues that were addressed in Beijing. The neoliberal economic model and market-driven policies that promote unfair trade and increased privatization of public goods and services, the increasing power and lack of accountability of multinational corporations, the resurgence of many forms of fundamentalism, the escalation of military conflict, the persistence of violence against women around the globe, the increasing number of natural disasters and the escalating backlash against women's sexual and reproductive rights have created a stifling climate for progressive changes in women's lives. As global forces threaten all human rights and as global inequities grow, the challenges facing women, their families and communities are ever more complex.

Despite the weaknesses noted above, the United Nations remains the international institution in which we have the most hope, where every nation in the world has a voice and a vote, and where developing countries play a leadership role in setting and carrying out its agenda. The United Nations also provides most systematically and broadly for civil society participation and has unquestionably advanced the global agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Women are agents of change. We play an essential role in putting gender in the global policy agenda. We want to move forward rather than merely struggle to hold the line on prior gains.

The forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, devoted to the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, provides an opportunity for Governments to look forward and to recommit themselves to achieving gender equality, development, human rights for **all** and peace.

The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) urges Governments at the forty-ninth session of the Commission to unequivocally reaffirm the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the International Conference on Population and Development and their full and accelerated implementation at the national level, in a brief political declaration.

WEDO also urges Governments and all other relevant actors including international financial institutions to include the following principles in their statements:

- Adopt a human rights approach to macroeconomic issues that promotes sustainable development linking economic growth to gender equality, social development and environmental protection and peace.

- Commit real resources at this meeting including the fulfilment of the internationally agreed 0.7 per cent target of the gross national product of developed countries for overall official development assistance, and put in place effective mechanisms for accelerated implementation of the commitments of the Platform for Action. Without political will and financial support, the Beijing Platform for Action will remain words on paper and the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved.

- Recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential to achieving the Millennium Declaration, **all** the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development.

- Take all measures at the national and global levels to ensure that gender equality is fully integrated, using the Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as frameworks, in the review of the Millennium Declaration in September 2005.

- Ensure civil society, including women's groups, meaningful participation at the Millennium Summit +5.

- Ensure equal and full participation of women in decision-making and power structures, particularly in macroeconomic institutions, environmental management and all peace and security processes.

- Adopt affirmative action measures including quotas to ensure gender balance at all levels of decision-making.